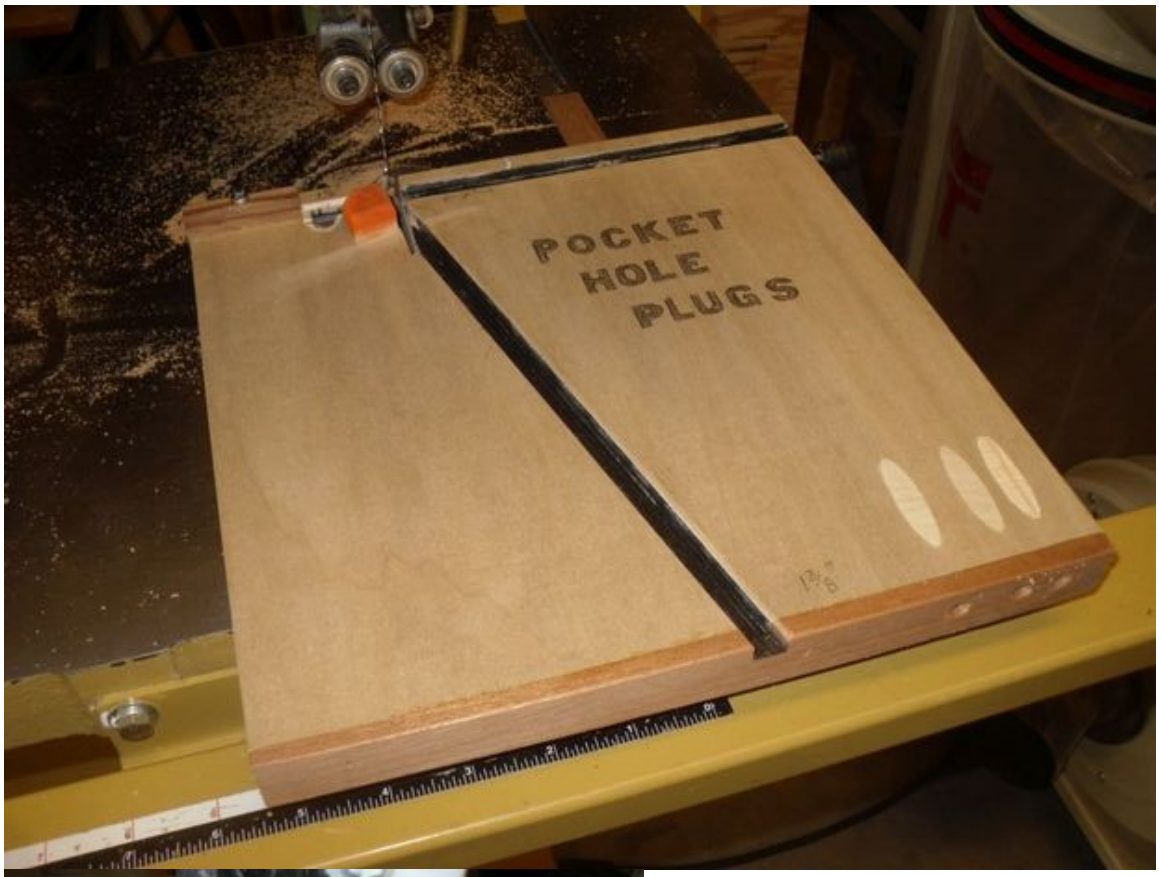
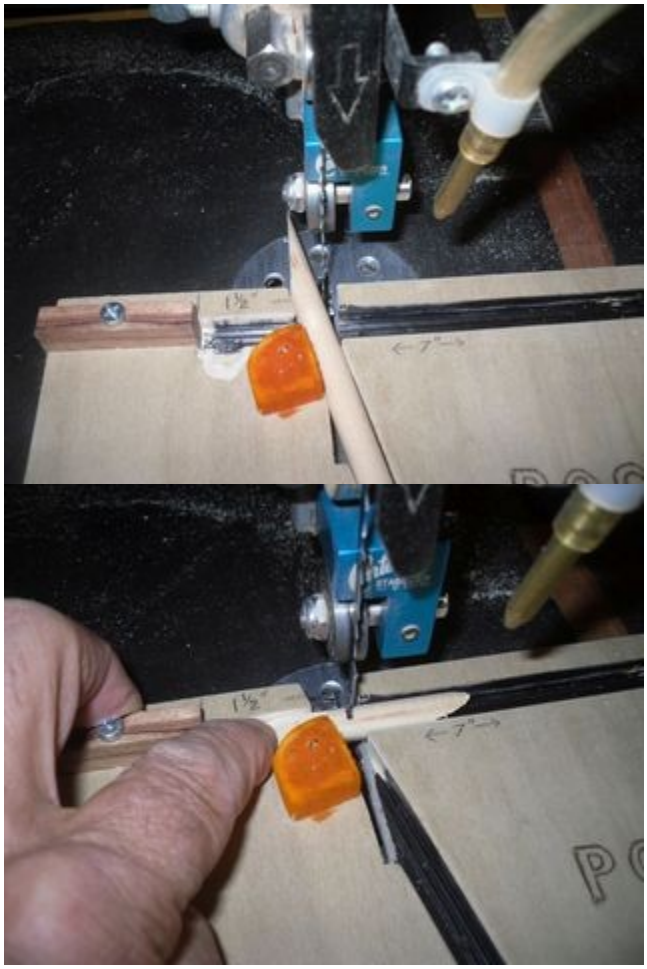
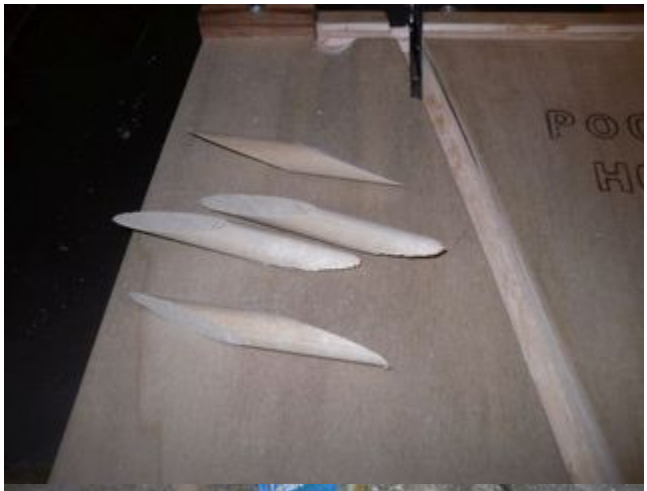
Pocket Hole Plugs







I needed some pocket hole plugs for a paint grade project I was doing for my wife. I live a couple hours, round trip, from supply sources, so not having any on hand was a problem.

A package of fifty pocket hole plugs runs about seven dollars, or more from local venders and about the same on line. If you have to figure in fuel cost and travel time cost, or pay for shipping, the price goes up significantly.

To solve the problem, I built this simple jig. I'd seen several well designed jigs for using the table saw to cut pocket hole plugs, but opted to go with using the band saw, instead. The idea of using a material throwing, ten inch blade on a three horse cabinet saw didn't appeal to me.

A 3/8" dowel cost about a buck. Using my jig, I get forty-eight plugs from one dowel. As such, I save about six dollars, or more, making my own.

In addition to cost savings, there are occasions when I'd like to use the material (e.g., oak, walnut, acacia) the holes are drilled in to plug the holes. If I have the dowels, this jig allows me to do that.

Of course, there are several methods of creating dowels, if one needed material for a specific wood species, or just wanted to make their own dowels.

Step 1: Band Saw Pocket Hole Plug Cutting Jig

[CONSTRUCTION]

The groove is just wide enough to hold a 3/8” dowel and runs at seventy-five (fifteen degrees off ninety) to the upper left of the table. I just set my miter to fifteen degrees and ran three cuts. So the bottom would remain flat at the back, I placed a spacer between the jig and the fence.

At the top of the jig, parallel to the front and back of the sled, is another groove for cutting the plugs to length. It has a stop (visible at the upper left of the jig in the photos) with an elongated hole, to allow adjustments for length.

The pocket holes on the bottom right are just to allow tests of the end product. The enlarged holes are so the plugs can be popped back out with relative ease.

The front of the jig has a stop, which hangs down about a quarter inch lower than the jig, so the jig can only go so far back. With it, you don’t have to guess where to stop. Of course, different band saw tables and fence configurations probably require different distances from the blade for positioning the stop, so the length of the jig needs to be enough the bandsaw blade can cut into the jig enough to cut the dowel, and still stop at the end of the table, if the stop will be mounted on the plywood edge, or have a little overhang on the front, for a place to mount the stop on the bottom of the jig. Either way, it's easiest to just position the jig for the stop by making the first cut, stopping when the cut is completed, then securing the jig and mounting the stop.

The stop block to the left of the blade is for cutting the double ended pieces in half, to create standard sized pocket hole plugs.

My jig uses the miter slot to keep the jig running straight. I installed it by placing a hardwood miter bar in the slot, then installing and adjusting the fence for the cut. Then I ran the jig and marked the

position for the bar on the underside of the jig. After that, I removed the jig and bar and secured the bar to the jig using the marks I'd just made.

I call the orange piece the "doze block." It's just there to serve as a stop for your finger, and to remind you of the danger zone, when cutting the resulting plugs in half to create standard hole plugs. Cutting the angles on the dowel seems less dangerous, since only the last one or two require you to be anywhere the blade.

I found that cutting pieces that had the angled cut of the hole plug on each end and that were long enough to produce to plugs, after the loss of material from the cut, produced the least waste, since cutting them in half produced two plugs. The alternative of trying to make a single plug with each cut required cutting the angled end off one end to square one end, and produced a lot of waste.

Once your jig is ready to run, you just make your first cut. For it, you only need to cut back from the end just enough to leave the flat end that came on the dowel.